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ABSTRACT

In response to numerous complaints about frequently sexist and degrading portrayals of women in advertising, the Ontario Status of Women Council sponsored a survey, in 1974 and 1975, designed to provide insights into the sorts of things that women find objectionable in advertising and the most common sources and subjects of offensive ads. This booklet reports the analysis of the first 1,017 completed survey forms returned to the council and explores the council's assessment of the results and the actions which individuals and advertisers may undertake to eliminate offensive advertising. Questions on the survey focused on where women find objectionable advertising, which products are advertised objectionably, and what women find objectionable in the advertising. Tables illustrating survey results and a copy of the survey form are included. (JM)

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About Face

towards a positive image of women in advertising

CS 203 170

"For a long time I have been peeved at the way women are exploited in advertising."

"In my opinion, almost all TV ads make women appear as fools, interested only in their wash or their breath."

"In viewing the ads with a critical eye, the thing that I noticed was that many of the ads, while not exactly discriminating against women, seemed to show that they were slightly moronic. Or they indicated that the people responsible for the ads thought the average I.Q. of women was in the range between idiots and imbeciles!"

"I realize 'ad men' believe it doesn't matter if their ads aggravate the buyer so long as they remember the name of the product. 'Taint so!"

"Women are humiliated or degraded in the commercials for using the 'wrong' product, then practically patted on the head as a 'good girl' for finally seeing the light and switching to the 'right one'."

"Give 'em hell and make them change!"

The above comments are typical of the attitudes of Ontario women toward the portrayal of women in advertising, according to a survey conducted by the Ontario Status of Women Council. Not all those participating in the survey were as articulate as the women quoted above, but every participant was as emphatic in her views that something is very wrong with the way women are often shown in the ads. The general tone of the response was, *"This is something that has bothered me for ages, but I figured what could I, as one person, do about it? Thank you for giving me the opportunity, at last, to express my views. Maybe if we all get together we can get something changed."*

That is precisely the aim of this report, which summarizes the results of the province-wide study carried out in late 1974 and early 1975. The results will undoubtedly prove uncomfortable for those advertisers who have felt that the issue was a tempest in a teapot. On the other hand, advertisers who have already heeded early rumbles of discontent in this matter, but have been confused as to what is or is not objectionable, will find many clues as to the pitfalls they could avoid. Individual women (and men), will be heartened to learn that they are not alone in their objections to some advertising, and that there is something they can do about it. Whatever the viewpoint, this report cannot be ignored: the dissatisfaction and dismay it expresses are but the tip of the iceberg.

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Why and how the survey was conducted

In the course of its work, the Ontario Status of Women Council has received numerous complaints and representations about the 'sexist' and frequently 'degrading' portrayal of women in advertising. Occasionally Council members have contacted or met with offending advertisers to present this viewpoint, sometimes with success, at other times with less-than-satisfactory results. By the spring of 1974 it was decided that an attempt should be made to assess the attitudes of a larger number of Ontario women toward this aspect of advertising in order to encourage advertisers to identify and eliminate anything women might view as objectionable, discriminatory, or offensive from their advertising. At the same time, it was expected that a widespread media-monitoring survey could help make the women of Ontario more conscious of the way women are depicted in advertising, and encourage them to participate in a continuing campaign to remove discrimination by sex from commercial advertising.

In May, 1974, a letter was sent to the approximately 700 organizations and individuals on the Council's mailing list requesting their participation in monitoring the media for advertising offensive to women. Thousands of one-page monitoring forms were distributed throughout the province over the following months to all those responding to Council's invitation to participate. (Samples of the invitation letter and the monitoring form are included in the Appendix to this report.)

The survey was designed not so much to yield statistical data as to provide insight into the sorts of things women find objectionable in advertising and the most common sources and subjects of offensive ads. Thus, the open-ended nature of the key parts of the questionnaire allowed women to express their views in their own words, without forcing them to agree or disagree with particular viewpoints. In fact, in the instructions for filling out the form, respondents were invited to indicate satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction with the way women are portrayed in advertising. But out of the 1,017 forms analyzed for this report, (plus dozens of letters on the issue) only one had anything positive to say about an advertisement. This particular form is reproduced in section VII of this report.

The first 1,017 completed monitoring forms returned to Council were analyzed for this report, which means the survey period covered the last few months in 1974 and the first few months in 1975. Since many respondents submitted more than one form, it is estimated that approximately 500 individuals actually participated in the survey. These participants came from 71 different towns and cities throughout Ontario ranging in size from Wingham and Delhi to Toronto, and in location from Rainy River and Kapuskasing to Cornwall and Ottawa. Indeed, fully 25% of the forms submitted came from centres under 100,000 in population, so the response was by no means limited to large urban centres.

The Ontario Status of Women Council wishes to express its heartfelt thanks and sincere appreciation to each and every one of the women who took the time to fill out an advertising monitoring form and send it in. Without the concern and especially the thoughtful consideration of these women, this survey would not have been possible.

Where do women find objectionable advertising?

The pervasiveness of objectionable advertising is probably the most striking result of this survey. It is not confined to any one city or area (not just to large urban centres, for example), nor to any particular media (although complaints about TV advertising predominate, this may only mean women spend more time watching TV than with other media), nor to any particular programmes or articles in these media. On the contrary, in this survey objectionable advertising was found:

- in 71 different Ontario towns and cities
- on 22 different Ontario TV stations
- in 43 different magazines and newspapers
- in advertising on billboards, handbills, pamphlets, in-store posters, product packages and a variety of other places
- on no fewer than 104 different radio and TV programmes

The precise figures as to where objectionable advertising was identified — and a list of all sources cited — are given in the Appendix. Probably more important than which media or programmes were the most frequently mentioned sources of offensive ads, however, is the total range or breadth of these sources.

Which products are advertised objectionably?

Once again, the pervasiveness of advertising offensive to women is a most noteworthy result of the survey. The range of products for which objectionable advertising was identified is truly phenomenal: a total of 294 different products (or stores or services) were cited as the subject of objectionable ads. While many of these products were mentioned only a few times each, no fewer than 55 were identified at least five times each, which would indicate that there is some basis for consensus in a considerable number of cases.

The following table shows the 23 products most frequently reported as being the subject of offensive or objectionable advertising. Although none of the percentages is high in absolute terms, even 1% of 1,000 responses means that 10 women independently and spontaneously identified a particular ad as objectionable — a fair degree of consensus, considering that the scope of the survey was virtually limitless with regard to the number of ads which could be assessed.

Table 1

Most frequently cited subjects of objectionable ads

	%	N = 1016
Milk	4.0	41
Playtex Cross-Your-Heart Bras, 28 Hour Girdle and Body Language Bra	3.3	34
Belvedere Cigarettes	3.1	32
Johnson & Johnson Maxi and Mini Pads	3.0	30
Alpo	2.3	23
Classified Ads	2.2	22
Secret Pantyhose	1.8	18
Speedy Muffler	1.8	18
Crisco Oil	1.8	18
2nd Debut	1.5	15
Spic & Span	1.4	14
Molson's	1.4	14
Thong Bathing Suit	1.4	14
Stay Free	1.3	13
All	1.3	13
Mary Brown Chicken Legs	1.1	11
Clairol Loving Care	1.1	11

	%	N = 1016
Geritol	1.1	11
Modess	1.0	10
Ajax	1.0	10
Loblaws	1.0	10
International Women's Year Advertising Campaign (Buttons & Ads)	1.0	10

A better indication of the subjects of objectionable advertising is obtained when the products mentioned are grouped into categories according to their type. The following table shows that laundry and dishwashing products (including fabric softeners as well as detergents) are the subject of the most frequently offensive ads, followed by feminine sanitary products (deodorant sprays as well as napkins and tampons) and personal apparel products (brassieres, girdles, pantyhose):

Table 2

Types of products most frequently cited as subject of objectionable ads.

All products/stores/services mentioned	= 294
	%
Laundry & Dishwashing	8.2
Feminine/Sanitary	6.9
Personal Apparel	6.0
Hair & Beauty Care	5.5
Household Cleaners	5.4
Cigarettes	5.0
Retail Stores	2.6
Cars	2.5

For a list of all 294 products, stores, and services identified as the subject of objectionable ads, see the Appendix.

What do women find objectionable in advertising?

In general, what women object to most in advertising is the portrayal of women in a stereotyped and/or degrading fashion. They are tired of ads which imply that a woman's place is only in the home, that her only work is housework, and her only worth how well she does this housework. They are fed up with commercials which convey and strengthen common cliches about women, such as the one that a woman is only interested in 'getting her man', and once she has him that she must be content to serve him and their children faithfully without regard to her own life, talents, or interests. They are especially disgusted with the way women are so frequently shown in advertising as ignorant and unsure of themselves, needing male advice and approval for everything they do or buy or wear. They resent ads which use women as sex objects to sell their products, or suggest that women **must** use their products to be attractive enough to interest a man. Many women are also embarrassed and offended by commercials and billboards which advertise personal women's products in such a public manner (and, they note, no men's products are given similar widespread exposure). In all these ways, they feel that advertisers are being unfair to women and demonstrating a lack of respect for women as individuals and as a group.

The following table summarizes the complaints women had about the advertising they monitored in this survey. In many instances, their reasons for objecting to a particular advertisement overlapped categories, and it proved difficult in analyzing their comments to assign each complaint to one category instead of another. On the other hand, not all women were offended by the same things. Nevertheless, this table should give a fair indication of the relative occurrence of each 'offence' mentioned in the 1016 monitoring forms analyzed.

Table 3

Respondents' assessment of offensive aspect of advertisement

	% of all objections
Stereotyping or demeaning the female role	33
Intellectually patronizing or insulting	30
Sex-linked portrayal (woman as sex object or obsessed with her own physical attractiveness)	22
Invasion of privacy (public exposure of intimate products)	8
Misleading advertising (in general)	4
All other complaints	3
	100

6 But what do these categories really mean?

Stereotyping or demeaning the female role

These complaints refer to ads which suggest — either explicitly or implicitly — that there is only one role for women in our society (that of housewife) and that it is the inevitable and proper destiny of every female. A commercial for Crisco Oil, for example, shows a girl in her late teens cooking dinner for her family and fiance, while the father stresses to the fiance that 'good cooks make good brides'. One woman assessing this ad comments, *"I objected to this ad because the future of this girl is involved . . . It portrayed a rather stereotyped role for a young girl who has no part in the decision of her own future, i.e., no alternative to marriage."* Another respondent sums up the feelings of many women when she says, *"Advertisements almost always represent tasks of washing and cooking as being in the proper domain of women, and this one* (for Fleecy fabric softener) *was typical. How will children, forming their ideas of sex roles, ever think that women can be construction workers, university professors, or carpenters, if they continually see ads such as this?"*

In contrast, according to many ads, the proper pursuits of men (and boys) always take them **outside** the home where they engage in interesting and exciting activities to the exclusion of females. A newspaper ad for Ontario Hydro which appeared in the Toronto Star in January, 1975, followed this pattern by showing a male Hydro employee, complete with clipboard, visiting an industrial concern to 'discuss' with the president the conservation of energy. The second photograph in the ad shows a housewife sitting passively at her kitchen table reading a booklet which 'tells' her how to conserve electricity 'too'. The respondent who sent in this ad comments, *"The all-too-prevalent notion of males 'doing business' contrasted with the insipid, necessarily-content-in-the-kitchen female . . . is disgustingly insulting to women, even those married to their kitchen!"* The housewife doesn't, of course, have the privilege of 'discussing' energy conservation, and (as always) quietly accepts being **told** what to do.

The aspect of such ads that most infuriates women is that it is rarely suggested that both sorts of roles or activities are possible for both sexes. Instead, the ads inevitably indicate that men and boys have no part to play in household tasks, but that women must always serve their menfolk (and children) in this way.

Commercials for two rather different products (Geritol and Vaseline Intensive Care hand lotion) come in for criticism in this regard. In both cases, a husband recites all the domestic tasks his wife has to do all day as 'proof' that she of course requires the product being advertised. There is no suggestion that the husband could be helping his wife around the house, and in fact the implication is that the wife **owes** her husband these services.

especially in the line in the Geritol commercial 'My wife, I think I'll keep her'. Comments one respondent, *"I guess we should be grateful he'll keep her for now, but she'd better stay in line — or else!"* With regard to the Vaseline commercial, one woman says, *"That wife could use an extra pair of hands to share the work-load — not hand lotion."*

In a similar vein: *"Why do mothers always get stuck washing things inconsiderate husbands and sons get dirty?"* asks one woman in reference to a commercial for Tide laundry detergent. *"And why are there no 'active, dirty daughters'?"*

Another woman, complaining about an Ivory dishwashing liquid commercial, asks, *"Why didn't the mother explain it to her son instead of her daughter?"*

On the other hand, according to the ads, women are expected to serve their men and children cheerfully, and to **enjoy** the household tasks which are their lot. A Downy fabric softener commercial is criticized for showing a small girl playing bride with a towel for a veil while her mother 'blathers on' (according to one respondent) about how fantastically soft Downy has made this towel. *"It casts a four-year old as a potential bride, thus programming the female into feeling marriage is essential and inevitable. It also includes the ubiquitous grinning housewife, rhapsodizing over some aspect of household routine."* Another respondent complains, *"Why do they always try to make housework look like such fun? It's not!"*

Referring to a Betty Crocker Snackin Cake commercial: *"I cannot imagine any woman I know making a cake in the middle of a forest, even the ultra-domesticated ones. Anyone who spends a vacation baking cakes in the wilds while everyone else buggers off for a good time just isn't real. I would never buy this product or any other by that company."*

A Colgate MFP commercial showing a family group on a sailboat and ending — 'After all, we brought Mom along' brought this comment: *"Mom sounds like the family dog."*

In short, what women are objecting to time and again is the way advertising depicts woman's role as so predetermined and confining that there is no scope for women to do anything other than what is traditionally regarded as 'women's work'. If no alternatives to traditional roles are presented, it makes it all the more difficult for women to break away from these roles and try something new. More than that, the fact that many women are doing precisely that, is virtually ignored in most advertising, for women are rarely shown involved in activities or occupations outside the home, or if they are, these are almost invariably traditionally female jobs such as secretary, teacher, or nurse.

Intellectually patronizing or insulting

What probably incenses Ontario women more than any other thing is the portrayal of women in advertising as stupid or incapable of any knowledge or expertise in their own right. They find this especially ludicrous when many of the ads which depict women in this way are for products used exclusively or bought predominantly by women, yet it is always a man who gives the instructions or demonstrates the superiority of the product. The exasperation women feel with regard to this situation is evident in the following comments on various advertisements:

Referring to an Ajax commercial: *"Most men don't know the difference between sink cleanser and detergent!... Men always get the good lines in commercials. There must be a special school where they learn how to speak in such a patronizing way. ECHHH!"*

"The man (in an Oxydol commercial) *is kindly talking down to the benighted housewife who wouldn't be able to distinguish soap from powdered milk (no doubt!) without his superior wisdom."*

In a Kraft cheese commercial: *"The implication is that if he (that velvet male voice in the background) was not there to tell her how to do it, she'd never be able to cook!... Please stop insulting me — I know how to grate cheese!.. Enough! Enough!"*

In a commercial for Glad kitchen bags: *"The housewife is portrayed as frazzled and bitchy. Men get all the good lines. Mr. Glad arrives just in time to save the day. He — and all the others like him — is getting sickening!"*

Referring to a Kleen & Shine commercial: *"I'm fed up with these sultry male voices telling me what to buy and why. They don't know."*

A typical comment on the milk commercials — the most frequently mentioned offensive commercial. *"Insulting and patronizing to have this smooth 'jock' talking about women like so much beef on the hoof to be physically judged and admired — all because they drink milk. Makes me want to throw up... milk and all."*

The 'dumb blonde' in the Speedy Muffler King commercial offended many women: *"Depicting women as simpering idiots, willing to accept any sales pitch as long as it is delivered unctiously ...At Speedy you're a Nobody — just another sucker."*

An Alpo dog food commercial, in which a husband reprimands his wife (who is apparently incapable of reading and understanding label ingredients for herself) for buying an inferior brand, comes in for particular criticism in this regard. Indeed, this commercial was one of the top five most offensive ads identified in the survey:

"If she can't be trusted to purchase dog food, God help the rest of her family."

"Portrays the woman as childish, weak, subservient. The man is seen as father-like and instructive. Sickening ad!"

"It implies that women buy what is cheapest without regard for, or knowledge of, nutritional value. Most women are far more aware of nutrition than men."

"The wife has apparently had a frontal lobotomy and cannot read, understand print, or feed the dog without male help."

Even when no male is present in a commercial (in person or as background voice), the females are frequently portrayed as simply silly. In a commercial for Prell shampoo, a woman who has recently tried it for the first time gushes 'I guess I fell in love'. The respondent who found this ad objectionable states, *"Shampoo is shampoo & not the second coming nor Rock Hudson. I was embarrassed for her and me, and mad that anyone would want to sell a product in this way."*

Another shampoo commercial, this time for Clairol, offends in a similar way. In this one, two women are talking together but at the same time, and one of them puts a bag over her head to indicate her distress with her hair. *"Women just don't carry on that way"* asserts our respondent. *"Advertisers must have a low opinion about women to put this garbage on the air."*

Similar sentiments were expressed about many of the Playtex commercials. About a bra ad: *"The text of this stupid commercial is inane and makes the two women look like a couple of idiots arguing about what to call this all important garment. Who cares?"*

Sex-linked portrayal

Advertisements which depict women as sex objects or 'decoration' are another source of consternation to many Ontario women. This sort of advertising suggests that men have no interest in women as people or as individuals, but only in their bodies. Air Jamaica commercials which talk about stewardesses as 'rare birds' and croon 'we make you feel good all over' come in for some scathing comment in this regard:

"This ad sounds as if it were offering prostitution services from the female stewardesses to the patrons. All versions of this ad are extremely offensive, whether the person verbalizing is male or female."

Similarly, a magazine ad for Belvedere cigarettes showing a woman wearing a blue denim shirt unbuttoned to breast level is severely criticized by many, and in fact was one of the single most offensive ads in the survey.

"What are they selling, the woman's body or cigarettes?"

"The suggested connection between smoking and wild sexual adventures is insulting."

"I really don't know what cigarettes has to do with a woman's breast half hanging out of her shirt. But what really gets me mad is that the previous ad (in the series) also showed a person in a denim shirt, also reaching for a package of Belvedere, but HIS shirt was done up to the neck. I suggest the NEXT ad show HIM reaching for a package in his front hip pocket with his fly open."

One respondent sums up the disgust many women feel toward this type of ad with the following complaint:

"I am tired of seeing near-naked women displayed indiscriminately on billboards, on TV, in newspapers, etc. It numbs the mind to the point that you get the feeling it is the woman being sold, not any product she is wearing, holding, etc. There is not an equivalent situation in which men's bodies are exploited so ruthlessly. I object!"

Another type of sex-linked ad which women find offensive is the kind which suggests that the product being advertised will give the user instant sex-appeal. The cumulative effect of such ads gives the impression that women cannot possibly be loved or appreciated for their own qualities or personalities, but that it is the hair dye or the make-up or the pantyhose or the brassiere which makes them attractive enough to interest a man.

"I find all ads repulsive when they imply that to be sexually attractive one must use Brand X. Such unrealistic portrayal must surely convey a very strange view of personal worth to young people."

The Certs commercial which says, "If he kissed you once, he'll kiss you again" is one example of this sort of thing:

"Sex is so cheapened by trashy ads like this. You've got to be kissable, huggable, lovable so boys will take notice of you — not because of what you are or do, but because of what you look like, smell like, taste like, etc."

So is the commercial for Nice and Easy hair colouring which shows a woman running slowly away from a man, then hiding in a chair until he finds her. Observes one respondent about this ad,

"It portrays a woman as a silly, childlike creature who will do anything to lure a man her way. She says that the colour rinse or dye 'lets me be me'. That's ridiculous! If she really wanted to be herself, she wouldn't be dyeing her hair!"

Perhaps the most annoying thing about these sorts of ads is that they reinforce the common idea in our culture that physical attractiveness is of utmost importance to a woman, while for a man it is what he is or does that counts. This idealizing of beauty also leads to the extreme emphasis on the desirability of youthfulness which is so prevalent in advertising. Although it is never suggested that aging is detrimental to a man (more often the implication is that it adds 'character' or 'maturity'), aging is depicted as destroying the attractiveness of women and thus rendering them near useless, and loveless, in our society. The ad for 2nd Debut make-up in which a husband is proud his over-40 wife can pass for 32, is a prime example of this.

"The usual sickening, boring, and insulting emphasis on how the female looks, stressing this as a matter of critical importance, rather than what she does. Men are always the doers, women just decorate the scene. Would a man use a cream to look 32 and be proud of it??"

Still another aspect of such advertising which bothers some women is the way it portrays women as dissatisfied and embarrassed with their real selves, obsessed with their bodily functions and physical attractiveness beyond the bounds of reality.

"I do not need FDS vaginal spray to 'help my mind make peace with my body' (as the ad states). *My mind has better things to worry about, and if it doesn't, a little spray isn't going to solve my problems".*

Invasion of Privacy

The heavy degree and prominence of advertising for personal products such as sanitary napkins, feminine deodorant spray, douches, or even brassieres and girdles is offensive to quite a number of women.

"It is very unfair to have these items (feminine hygiene products) *mentioned when males are present — which is often! Is nothing sacred to the money grabbers?? This is very degrading to women and must be stopped!"*

"I don't like to see ads for women's underwear on TV. . . I would object just as much as a man parading around in his undershorts."

"I object to ads of such a personal nature (sanitary napkins) being advertised on television. There's just too much emphasis put on women's sex and personal needs. I'm fed up with it and refuse to buy these products so advertised."

It is not only the fact that these products are being advertised which disturbs those women who find it objectionable, but the fact that they are advertised on television with apparently no regard for the programme or time of day. One respondent underscores this point as follows:

"This ad (for sanitary napkins) *came on as the first commercial in the Sunday night movie, at 7:10 p.m. Our entire family was watching. We are embarrassed by these ads and feel they are in poor taste and in very bad time slots. Such ads leave no privacy in a woman's life."*

The general concensus among women complaining about this sort of advertising is that it should be confined to women's magazines and has no place on television, radio, billboards, or transit vehicle placards.

What does all this mean?

Council's assessment of the survey results

Taken on an individual basis, the complaints against advertising collected in this survey may seem to some people like small, in some cases perhaps even silly, objections. The portrayal of women in advertising in a stereotyped or degrading fashion is so common that many of us — too many of us, in fact — accept it without thinking anything of it. But that is just the problem. In the opinion of the Ontario Status of Women Council, it is the very frequency and proliferation of such advertising that makes it so significant. The more people (particularly young people, forming their ideas of sex roles in our society) see it, the more they are inclined to believe it and accept it as true and inevitable. The cumulative effect of advertising can influence women's and girls' ideas as to how they are supposed to act in our society, at the same time telling men and boys how to view and deal with females. When people constantly see these mass-media images of women solely as homemakers or sex objects, with no further abilities or personalities, it is difficult for either sex to visualize women outside these roles. While the Council certainly does not believe that advertising has created the roles in which it portrays women, it does feel that advertising serves as one of the more powerful forces in our society for their reinforcement.

The results of this survey indicate that many advertisements are not relevant to the changing life-styles (and sex roles) in Canada to-day. Or, if they are relevant to some women (e.g., to those who are satisfied in the homemaker role), they are too often presented in a negative context (i.e., frazzled, insecure homemaker rather than an intelligent manager of a household).

Even if some women do identify with this negative portrayal of women, they are beginning to realize their lives do not have to be like this, and so they start to resent ads which reinforce the confining aspects of their lives. In this regard, the Council believes that advertising has a unique opportunity, through showing women in the most positive light possible, to help women to realize their goals and enhance their lives. Advertising which helps women feel good about themselves will also inevitably benefit the advertisers, both in terms of their products' image and also in terms of sales. It is interesting to note that although 30% of the respondents in our survey had used the product in question before monitoring an objectionable ad, only 1% state they are willing to continue to do so, as a result of the advertisement.

While undoubtedly it is impossible to please all of the people all of the time — and certainly some people will find something objectionable in almost any advertising — the results of this study strongly indicate that it is not just a few advertisers who are producing ads objectionable or offensive to women. Rather, perhaps the majority of advertisers are doing so. This might help explain why so many products apparently sell as well as they do: if everybody (particularly in the same product category) is committing the same sins, the offensive ads do not stand out enough from the rest to affect sales negatively. This study strongly suggests, however, that women are buying these products

despite the advertising, rather than because of it, usually because they must buy something in each product category. So many factors go into the successful marketing of a product that it cannot be assumed the product sells well because of the advertising.

Council believes that as more and more advertisers begin to 'tune in' to women's negative attitudes to their old-hat advertising techniques, they will begin to produce ads which portray women more realistically and more acceptably according to contemporary standards and life styles. Some advertisers are already showing women in significant roles outside their homes, with interests and knowledge beyond their roles as homemakers. They are showing men sharing in or even taking over certain domestic chores. They are allowing women to speak authoritatively about the virtues of the advertised products. Gradually these new approaches are the ones which will begin to stand out from the rest because they are so refreshingly different -- and more relevant to many women — while advertisers who continue to produce ads portraying women in a stereotyped or demeaning fashion will find that they are the losers.

What can YOU do — as an individual — to eliminate offensive advertising?

1. 'Tune in' to the underlying messages in commercials and advertisements which depict women or girls. Try to recognize what the ad is implying about the proper role or behaviour of women in our society.

2. If you don't like this underlying message, don't let it pass! Nothing will change if you don't voice your objection. Complain to the manufacturer of the product being advertised. Complain to the television or radio station or publication which carried the ad. If you can find out the name of the advertising agency which created or placed the ad (the station or publication may be willing to help you on this point, if only to get itself 'off the hook'), by all means complain to it as well. Be sure to send a copy of your complaint to the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board, 1240 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario, an organization which exerts considerable influence on the type of advertising produced in Canada today.

3. If at all possible, put your complaint in writing (a telephone call is too easy for the intended recipient to avoid) and address it to the highest position (e.g., the president of the company, the general manager of the station, the editor of the publication). Be specific about what aspects of the advertisement you find offensive, and why. Make it clear that unless you receive a satisfactory reply to your letter within two weeks, you intend never to buy the advertised product again. (And do mention it if you have been in the habit of buying the product in the past. No business likes to hear it is about to lose a customer.)

4. Then, carry through with your threat. Stop buying any products which continue to advertise in a manner you find offensive, even if this means finding a substitute you actually like less. But be aware that boycotting alone can have little effect in bringing about the changes you desire unless the advertisers know the reason for it. Otherwise, they may blame a slump in sales (if this should occur) on any of a number of other factors, and the offensive advertising will remain the same.

5. Talk about what you are doing to your friends, neighbours, relatives, colleagues at work, club-mates: in short, everyone you meet. Encourage them to be aware of the images of women portrayed in advertising, and to participate in getting undesirable images changed.

6. Keep the Ontario Status of Women Council, (801 Bay St., 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1Z1) informed as to your interest and concern in this important area. We are especially interested in your reaction to this report, so that we can make your views known to the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board and other associations representing the advertising industry in Canada.

Remember, the key to change is to complain. Although boycotting may be the ultimate weapon, past experience has shown that complaints alone — particularly when they come from a number of consumers rather than from 'pressure groups' — can be extremely effective in getting advertisers to change their tactics.

What can YOU do — as an advertiser — to eliminate offensive advertising?

1. Examine your current or proposed advertising carefully to determine if it portrays women in a manner which they may find offensive. Refer to the section of this report entitled "What do women find objectionable in advertising?" as a general guideline for what to look for.

2. In conducting advertising research, include specific questions to gauge the reactions of consumers to the way in which women are depicted in the ads in question. Don't expect this type of reaction to come through spontaneously if you are only looking for the comprehension and believability of the basic message.

3. When a new advertisement or campaign is planned, challenge those responsible for its creation to portray any women in it in a manner in keeping with (if not ahead of) the changing sex roles in contemporary society. Consider the one positive assessment of a commercial (for Nescafe coffee) received in this study. (see opposite page)

4. Some other ideas arising from this study which might be considered:

(a) Show women in roles other than (or in addition to) homemaker, in recognition of the fact that over 40% of Canadian women over 18 years of age now work at least part-time outside the home.

(b) If you portray a woman as a homemaker, let her be an intelligent manager of her household.

(c) Show men (and boys) sharing in household tasks that have been traditionally considered 'women's work'.

(d) Consider using females for voice-over wherever possible.

(e) Show men respecting women's opinions and ideas.

(f) Avoid the implication that women are obsessed with the condition of the laundry, the floor, or their physical appearance. Depict these relatively minor concerns in a more realistic overall context.

(g) Let women choose, do, buy, or cook things for their own personal benefit, not just to get the approval of their husbands, children, mothers-in-law, or bosses.

(h) Promote personal care products in terms of what they can do for the woman herself, in the context of her lifestyle, interests, or activities, not in terms of providing her with ammunition for catching (or keeping) her man.

(i) In advertising personal hygiene products or underwear, take a second look at the proposed medium and time slots. At the very least, try to avoid family viewing times with such commercials. (In Council's opinion, the only acceptable medium for such advertising is women's magazines.)

AUDIO/VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Who was selling the product: MALE ☑ FEMALE ☑ OTHER ☐ _____ (specify)

No. of Males	No. of Females	Background Voice	Specify characters in ad other than human beings, i.e. animals or cartoons.
1	1	MALE ☐ FEMALE ☑	

Briefly describe actions of participants

2 attractive, middle-aged people come into their kitchen. They are both dressed for work. They co-operate in making breakfast, and both read the paper. They share a quiet smile with each other over coffee. Cheerful background theme-song.

If Possible, list discernible occupations of participants

Both seem to be working people – white-collar, I suppose.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

Briefly describe why you objected to the ad

I like this ad because here are 2 convincing human beings doing something very ordinary and pleasant — there's an easy co-operation, instead of rigid sex-division.

This is what we need. I wanted to remark on this instead of only making complaints.

5. If you are genuinely interested in improving the image of women in advertising, but still confused as to what is or is not offensive, the Ontario Status of Women Council (801 Bay St., 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1Z1) may be able to assist you. A meeting can be arranged by calling 965-1111.

Appendix

Media identified as sources of objectionable advertising

It should be noted that media which received most frequent mention as carrying objectionable advertising are not necessarily the most offending sources. The relatively high percentages cited for certain radio and television stations, for example, may only mean that these stations are watched or listened to more frequently than other stations. Thus, it is not surprising that those stations and newspapers mentioned more frequently tend to be in the larger cities (i.e., the ones with the most listeners or readers) and that the two magazines receiving most frequent mention are two of the larger circulation periodicals, among women, in Canada. Similarly, the frequent identification of 'movies' and 'news' as programmes during which objectionable advertising appears likely means that these are the sorts of programmes women watch most, not that they necessarily carry more offensive ads than other programmes.

Table 4

Medium in which objectionable advertising identified

Number of ads mentioned = 1016

	%
Television	64
Magazine	12
Newspaper	8
Radio	6
Billboard	6
Other	4

Table 5

Television stations on which objectionable advertising identified

Total mentions of TV stations = 527

	%
CFTO (Metro Toronto)	24.3
CBC "	22.4
GLOBAL "	11.8
CTV (Kitchener)	8.0
CHCH (Hamilton)	7.8
CFPL (London)	5.3
CJOH (Ottawa, Peterborough)	4.2
CBOT (Ottawa)	3.2
CKPR (Thunder Bay, Nipigon)	2.7

The following TV stations each received less than 2% of total mentions:

CKCO	(Kitchener)
CKWS	(Kingston)
CHEX	(Peterborough)
CKLW	(Windsor)
CKSO	(Kapuskasing, Sudbury)
CITY	(Toronto)
CFCL	(Timmins)
CHNO	(Sudbury)
CBC	(Rainy River)
CKNX	(Wingham)
CHFD	(Thunder Bay)
CKVR	(Barrie)
CFCL	(Kapuskasing)

Table 6

Radio stations on which objectionable advertising identified

Total mentions of radio stations = 54

	%
CFRB (Metro Toronto)	33.3
CBC "	20.4
CHUM "	13.0
CKEY "	13.0

The following radio stations each received less than 4% of total mentions:

CHML (Hamilton)
CKFM (Toronto)
CKAP (Kapuskasing)
CFJR (Brockville)
CHLO (Delhi)
CJBQ (Belleville)
CHYM (Kitchener)
CHFI-FM (Toronto)
CKLB (Oshawa)
CHOK (Sarnia)

Table 7

Magazines in which objectionable advertising identified

Total mentions of publications = 111

	%
Time	24.4
Chatelaine	21.4
Weekend	8.1
Canadian	6.3

The following publications each received less than 5% of total mentions:

Maclean's
Better Homes & Gardens
Homemakers
Readers Digest
Women's Day
Cosmetics (Trade)
Miss Chatelaine
Christmas Magazine
Psychology Today
Ebony
Revue-Moteur
People
Mademoiselle
Golf
Newsweek
Ingenue
Family circle
TV Guide
Canadian Stereo Guide
Durham Region Business & Industry
Toronto Star TV Guide

Table 8

Newspapers in which objectionable advertising identified

Total mentions of newspapers = 81

	%
Globe & Mail	30.8
Toronto Star	25.9
Ottawa Citizen	11.0
Hamilton Spectator	8.6

The following newspapers each received less than 4% of total mentiones:

Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal
Times-News
Ottawa Journal
Sunday Sun
Financial post
Ottawa Times
Guelph Mercury
Cornwall Daily Standard-Freeholder
Simcoe Reformer
London Free Press
Kingston Whig-Standard
St. Catharines Standard
Oshawa Times
Stratford Beacon Herald
Kitchener-Waterloo Record

Table 9

Locations of billboards identified as carrying objectionable advertising

Total mentions of billboards = 51

	%
Metro Toronto	74
London	8
Thunder Bay	4
Sault Ste. Marie	4

The following billboard locations each received less than 4% of the total mentions:

Cornwall
Aurora
Oakville
Hamilton
Ottawa

Table 10

Television and Radio Programmes on which objectionable advertising identified

Total mentions of programmes = 104

	%
Movie	6.0
News	4.7
Between Programmes	3.4
Shoulder to Shoulder	2.0
All in the Family	1.3
Another World	1.2
Hockey Night in Canada	1.1
M.A.S.H.	1.0
Carol Burnett Show	1.0
Emergency	1.0

The following programmes each received less than 1% of the mentions.

Police Story
Rhoda
Mary Tyler Moore
Ironside
Academy Performance
Edge of Night
Lucas Tanner
Hawaii Five-O
Radio & T.V. Station Announcers
Streets of San Francisco
Marcus Welby
The Waltons
The Beachcomber
Wally Crouter
Game Show
Archer
Late News
Bob Newhart
This Day
Chico and the Man
The Jeffersons
Sh! It's the News
Maude
Excuse My French
What's The Good Word
Kung Fu
Julie Andrews
Bruce Smith Show
Roberta Flack Special
Sandford & Son
Anything You Can Do
World Beat
Irish Rovers
Children's Programme
Smothers Brothers
Petrocelli
W 5
Great Debate
Tommy Hunter Show
Documentary
Cannon
House of pride
Kolchak
Untamed World
Johnny Carson Show
Mannix
MacMillan & Wife
The Lucy Show
Front Page Challenge
Morning Talk Show
Metro Morning
Earl Warren Show
Come to the Movies
Twentieth Century
It's a Musical World
Noonday News
Ombudsman
Toronto News
Newsline
Twenty-four Hours
Larry Solway Show
Family Affair
Barnaby Jones
Happy Days
Courtship of Eddie's Father
Tony Orlando & Dawn
Tattletales
Walt Disney
Regional Contact
Starlight Serenade
Under Attack
Dick Van Dyke Show
Bill McVean Afternoon Show
Million Dollar Lottery Show
General Hospital
Apple's Way
Brady Bunch
John Gilbert Show
Six Million Dollar Man
Rockford Files
Police Surgeon
The Odd Couple
Days of Our Lives
Police Woman
Get Christie Love
Inquiry
Family Court
Larry Henderson
Sierra
Starlost
Kojak
Shaft
Barbara Frum
Bill Deegan

Table 11

Products, Stores, and Services cited as subjects of objectionable advertising

The most frequently mentioned subjects are given in Table I (Section III in the body of this report).

The following products, stores, or services each received less than 1% of total mentions:

Burgerbits & Beef Bites
Colonel Sanders Kentucky Fried Chicken
Nice & Easy Hair Colour
Air Jamaica
Wisk Detergent
Kraft Cheese Slices
Easy Off
T. Eaton Co. (Clothing & Hosiery Ads)
Cavalier Cigarettes
Calgonite & Calgon
Bright Side Shampoo
Feminine Hygiene Products, F.D.S.
Downy Fabric Softener
Colgate MFP
Cascade Dishwasher Detergent
Palmolive Liquid
Chanel No. 5
Sears Sale
Chevrolet
Timex
Tide
Oxydol
Fleecy
Josten's Rings
Saran Wrap
Joy
Pamper Diapers
Neet
Oil of Olay
Sunlight
Monarch Margarine
Ford Mercury Cougar
Oldsmobile
Secret Super Dry Deodorant
Shake & Bake
Lady Grecian Hair Colouring
J. Cloth
Bacardi Rum
Dristan
Vita Bath
Coca Cola
Ayds Reducing Plan
Virginia Slims Cigarettes
Benson & Hedges Cigarettes
Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix
Ivory Liquid
Liquid Plumber
Ultra Brite Toothpaste
Mister Transmission
Want Ads
Fleishmann's Margarine
Glad Kitchen Bags
Sunoco
One A Day Iron & Vitamin Pills
Kleen & Shine
Vicks Formula 44D
Noxema
Right Guard / Foot Guard
Comet
Close Up Toothpaste
Bob Bannerman Motors (American Motors)
Lysol Spray
Food City — Meat & Chicken
Tampax
D.G.S. Group — Personnel Consultants
Vaseline Care Hand Lotion
Hanes Nylons
Mr. Clean
Confidets
Breck Shampoo
Volvo
Punch
Mop & Glo
Woolco
Sun Flight — ABC
Yardley Sea Mist & Bronzetan Cosmetics & Cachet
Green & Ross Tires
Mr. Muscle Oven Cleaner
Seeburg
Pledge
Triumph TR6
Holiday Inn
Softique Bath Oil
Jade East
Tabu Perfume
Coffeemate
Prell Shampoo
Winegard Mercury & Ford
Bon Ami
Metracal
Province of Ontario Tourist Film
Astro Shield
Lux Liquid
Canadian Tire Co. — Floor Tiles
Culligan Water Conditioner
Sonora Peach Nut Oil
Draino
Maxwell House Coffee
Turtles
Flintstones & Chocks Vitamins
Johnson's Baby Oil
Chrysler
Betty Crocker
Viking
Bell Canada
Imperial Margarine
Gordon's Gin
Absorbine Junior
Seagrams
Certs Breath Mints
Mattel's Knit Magic
Kotex
Zero
Ontario Hydro
Simpsons' Department Store
Skyline Hotels
Wonder Bra
Wonder Books
Duncan Hines
Labatt's Beer
Purina Dog Food
Maple Leaf Tenderflake Lard
Nestles Quik

Leon's Furniture
Mini Gym
Protein 21 Shampoo
Sunglasses — Thorncliffe Shopping Centre
Arrid Extra Dry Deodorant
Heinz Tomato Sauce
Canadian Armed Forces
Hotel Accommodation Airport Hilton
Bank of Nova Scotia Savings Adv.
Real Estate Ads
Movie of the Month Prize on local radio
Montgomery Ward Mattress
Jose Cuervo Tequila
Nanimex
Barries Furriers
Matador Fitness Centre
Kimbies
Halls Pro Hardware
Contac Cold Pills
Anacin
Canada Manpower Service
British Airways
Alberto Balsam
Futura
NyQuil
Mr. Submarine
Kayser
Puerto Rican Rum
Bowater Canadian Ltd.
Ada Mackenzie Shops
General Mills
Kelloggs
Imperial Oil Esso Products
Mission Millions Possible
Collegiate Sports
K-Tel
Gregory System for Hair Removal
Weight Watchers
Teacher's Scotch
Cosmo Girl Face & Figure Salon
Orlane
Rita Mansfield Modelling & Finishing School
Soft 'N Dry
Formfit
No More Tangles
MacDonalds
T.W. Clean
Sominex
Manhandler Beans
Max Factor Eye Shadow
Estogerica
Cover Girl Mascara
Daisy Fresh Bra
Participaction
Gain Detergent
Royal Bank
Dominion
Miracle Mart
Dentine Gum
Simulated Diamond Ring
Mark Eden Bust Developer
Abortion (anti)
Dow Oven Cleaner
Viceroy
Crazy Glue
Mercury
Prestolite
TAS Communications Service
Dainty Bol
Midol
Kelly Girl (Office Help)
I.B.M. Photocopier
Winston Cigarettes
Revenue Canada (Tax on Air Travel)
Mecca
Northern Electric
Turkey Producers
Beatrice Fruit Bottom Yogurt
Lady Schick
Lee's Jeans
Sony Dictating/Transc. Machines
Dale Carnegie Course
Nine Lives Cat Food
Campbell Soups
Sound Power (stereo components)
McGill University Ad
Harveys
Tic Tac Mints
Dial Deodorant
Listerine
World of Beauty Club
The Bundler
Armco Building Systems
Nails 'N Lashes
Bonanza Steaks
Living Lighting
House of Teak Furniture Show
Dominion Textiles Ltd.
Towers Sale
Fisher-Price Toys
Handywrap
Westinghouse Self-Cleaning Oven
Black Velvet Whisky
Bedford Industries Toy Packaging
Hyatt Regency
Redpath & Olympic Athletes
Kleenex
Premium Readers Club & Cookbook
Spray 'N Wash
Whisper Pantyhose
Dodds Kidney Pills
Babies Only Please
Compoz
L'Oreal Hair Colouring
CN-CP Telecommunications
Skinny Dip
Sunshine Girl
Dolan Automotive Services
Aamco Transmissions
Public Health Ad
GSW Home Service
Taste Keepers
Freedoms
Hertz Car Rentals
Love's Baby Soft
Mop Magic
Diet Pepsi
Kraft Miracle Whip
Westinghouse (Refrigerator)
Seeburg
Borg Textiles
Five Roses Flour
Chevelle
Austin Marina
Lipton Soup
Tums
Ethan Allen Galleries
Fisher Price Toys
Serta
Gulf Heating System
Carlsberg Beer
Midas Muffler
Tegrin
Cars
The Bay
K-Mart
Minute Rice
Clorox
Folger's Coffee

Ontario

Secretariat for Social Development

Ontario Status of Women Council
801 Bay Street, 3rd Fl.
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1Z1

416/965-1111

Queen's Park
Toronto Ontario

MONITORING - STAGE TWO

Are you satisfied with the way in which women are portrayed in advertising? Do you object to women being shown as stupid or a sex object or both? Do you think there is nothing wrong with the manner in which women are depicted? We want your views.

The Ontario Status of Women Council invites you to participate in STAGE TWO of our monitoring programme taking place through the month of January, 1975.

We are counting on you to provide us with the information we need to go to the Advertising Standards Council and the offending advertising agencies to demand the elimination of discrimination by sex in advertising.

You can help by jotting down your thoughts on advertisements while viewing Canadian T.V., listening to the radio, reading Canadian publications, and taking notice of billboards and placards. Use the form on the back of this letter as the easiest way to record your views. These forms may be reproduced if necessary. May we suggest that, alone or with friends, you spend one hour on T.V. commercials, one hour on radio, one hour on newspapers and magazines. When out walking or driving, or on public transit, observe billboards and placards.

YOUR CO-OPERATION IS THE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS. WE LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR OPINIONS. YOU CAN BE ASSURED THEY WILL FORM PART OF THE FINAL REPORT.

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Ontario

ONTARIO STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL

LAURA SABIA,
CHAIRWOMAN

ADVERTISING MONITORING

Instructions:
A) *Please Print*
B) *Complete a Separate Form for each advertisement*
C) *Complete forms should be returned to:*

STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL
801 BAY STREET, 3rd. FLOOR
TORONTO, M5S 1Z1

CATEGORY - *indicate by (✓).*

Date of show or publication — Day | Month | Year

Canadian Television ☐ Radio ☐ Newspaper ☐ Magazine ☐ Billboard ☐ Other ☐ (specify)

T.V./Radio Station or Publication Name | Program Name

Billboard Location | Street

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Brand Name | Have you previously used the product? YES ☐ NO ☐

Would you use the product as a result of the advertisement? YES ☐ NO ☐

AUDIO/VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Who was selling the product: MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ OTHER ☐ (specify)

No. of Males | No. of Females | Background Voice MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ | Specify characters in ad other than human beings, i.e. animals or cartoons.

Briefly describe actions of participants

If Possible, list discernible occupations of participants

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

Briefly describe why you objected to the ad

Did the ad discriminate against any of the following?

AGE ☐ SEX ☐ RACE ☐ COLOUR ☐ RELIGION ☐ MARITAL STATUS ☐

City in which you reside

Did you make a formal complaint by LETTER ☐ by PHONE ☐

To whom? SPONSOR ☐ PUBLICATION ☐ RADIO/T.V. STATION ☐

WHERE POSSIBLE, PLEASE ATTACH COPY OF AD

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Locations of Respondents

Aroland
Ajax
Aurora
Barrie
Belleville
Brantford
Brockville
Brooklin
Burlington
Caledon East
Campbellville
Chapleau
Chatham
Cobourg
Copper Cliff
Cornwall
Delhi
Dunnville
Durham
Fergus
Fonthill
Georgetown
Guelph
Hamilton
Ingersoll
Ingleside
Jerseyville
Kapuskasing
Kemptville
Kincardine
Kingston
Kitchener
Leamington
Lindsay
London
Maple
Metro Toronto
Mildmay
Milton
Nakina
Newmarket
Niagara-on-the-Lake
Nipigon
Oakville
Oshawa
Ottawa
Peterborough
Port Dover
Rainy River
Red Rock
Rexdale
Ridgetown
Sarnia
Sault Ste. Marie
Simcoe
Smooth Rock Falls
St. Catharines
Stoney Creek
Stratford
Sudbury
Thornhill
Thunder Bay
Timmins
Tweed
Walkerton
Waterloo
West Lincoln
Weston
Whitevale
Winchester
Windsor
Wingham

Second in a series of reports aimed at improving the status of women in Ontario.

About Face
Towards a positive image of women in textbooks

Volte-Face
Vers une image positive de la femme dans les manuels scolaires

About Face II
Towards a positive image of women in advertising

Ontario

75 - 2429